



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

**1420 E 6th Ave, PO Box 200701 Helena, MT 59620-0701
(406) 444-1267**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. Purpose of and Need for Action

1. Project Title: Conrad Gun Club D.B.A. Pondera Shooting Sports Club

2. Type of Proposed Action:

- Remove and replace wood trap houses with concrete houses.
- Remove and replace one set of existing cement trap lanes, with a new set of wider, handicapped accessible cement lanes.
- Remove and replace manual trap machine with automatic machine.
- Construct new multi-purpose indoor shooting facility.
- Provide handicapped parking area.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action: The Conrad Gun Club is leased from Pondera County, Montana. The tract of land is two and one half (2.5) acres located in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 22, Township 28 North, Range 3 West. The property is approximately 300 feet square and lying in the southwest corner of the above described property. An additional one acre located due west of the county leased portion has been donated for from the MaryEllen Brownell trust, for the new parking area. Total property will increase to approximately 3.5 acres. (See figures 1, 2, and 4)

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) MCA87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The 2007 Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges for public purposes. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

5. Need for the Action(s): There is an overall need in the surrounding community to provide a safe secure shooting sports complex and education facility, with handicapped access. Currently the community is under served and with a growing interest in the shooting sports. The new proposed shooting complex will provide safe indoor, year round, handicapped accessible air rifle & pistol, small bore rifle & pistol, and archery, which are currently unavailable in the area. There is also a need for an indoor meeting and educational area, plus secure storage of range property. Current old potentially hazardous trap machines, deteriorating shooting lanes and wooden trap houses, need safety improvements and replacement. Parking area is unimproved and shooting lanes are deteriorating and do not provide adequate handicapped access on the shooting line.

6. Objectives for the Action(s): Provide new safe shooting sports options and handicapped access through construction of a new indoor shooting complex, and year round opportunities for air rifle & pistol, small bore rifle & pistol, and archery shooting. Provide improved indoor shooting complex and trap ranges to enhance shooting education programs for Hunter Education, Bow Hunter Education, 4-H, Boy Scouts, etc. Provide an indoor area for meetings, educational programs, workshops etc. and also an area for safe secure storage of property. Major safety objectives are to eliminate the need for personnel in the trap houses during shooting and improve the safety and security of the trap houses themselves. New shooting lanes are necessary for improved safety and accessibility for the handicapped. Provide handicap parking, bathroom facilities and range accesses are additional objectives of the overall range improvements. The proposals will consequently eliminate the potential safety hazards on the trap ranges and provide handicapped accessibility in several areas. Additionally the proposals will expand the variety of shooting opportunities at the club while greatly improving overall operations, efficiencies and utility on all the range(s).

7. Maps and Supporting Figures:



Figure 1 – Conrad Gun Club Area Map



Figure 2 – Two and one-half acre leased area of existing Conrad Gun Club



Figure 3 – Land Ownership in Surrounding Area



Figure 4 – Current Conrad Gun Club



Figure 5 – Proposed Shooting Sports Complex with additional 1 acre expansion for parking (Dark Gray). The shooting sports building will be sited just east of the west property line of the leased Pondera County property. The east edge of the new building will be approximately where the east edge of the current building sits. The south boundary is the County road, to the east is farm ground, and to the west will be the proposed parking area on approximately 1 acre donated from the MaryEllen Brownell trust.

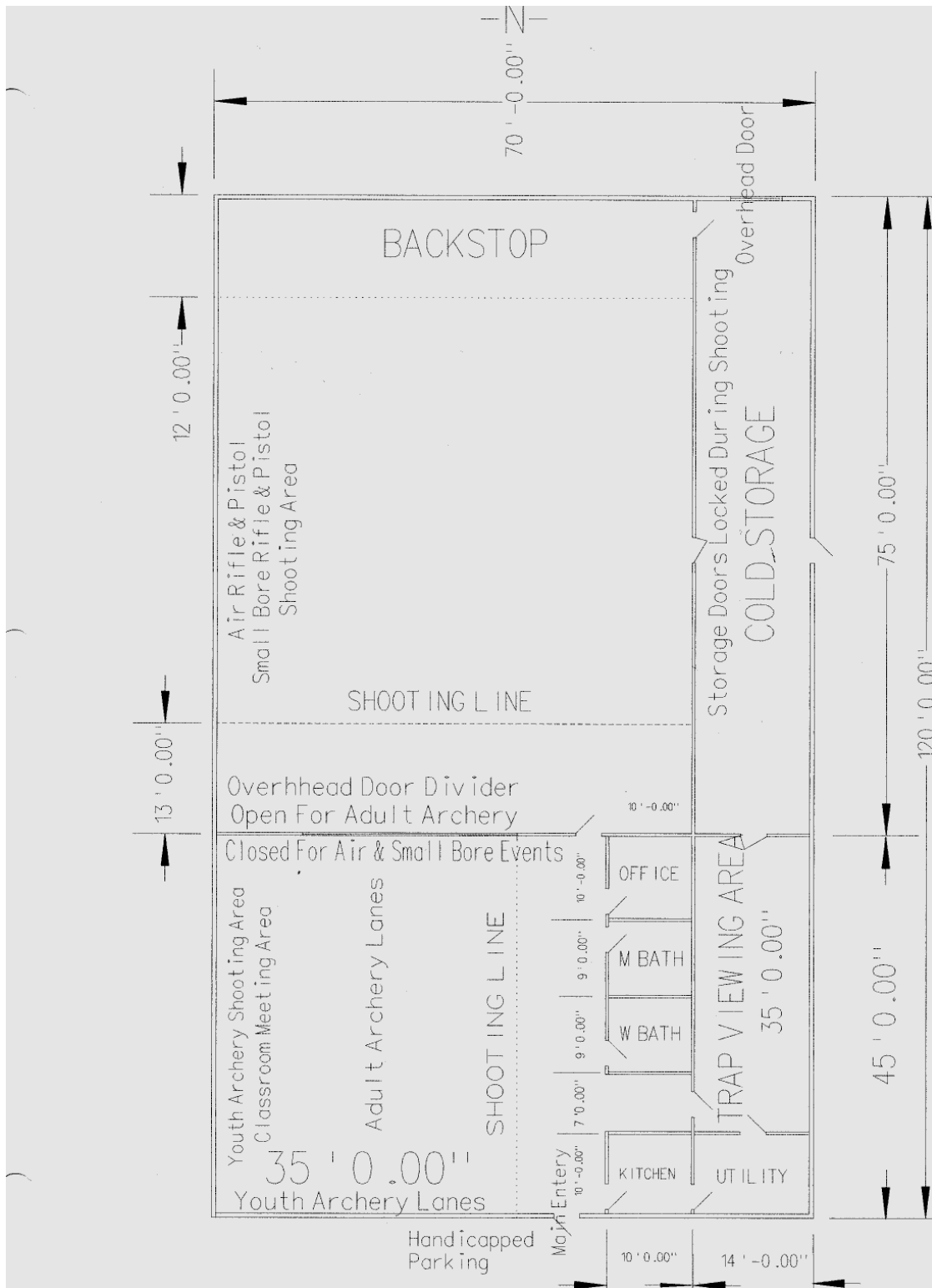


Figure 6 – Floor Plan of Shooting Sports Building

8. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

Range is approximately 3.5 acres, but improvements are limited to a smaller area with proposed range enhancements. The largest portion of approximately 1 acre will be used as a new parking area (Figure 5).

9. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The area affected is the existing Conrad Gun Club which has been in place for many years and is located just southwest of Conrad, MT and south of the Conrad Airport. Range is built upon former agricultural land and is surrounded on three sides by cropland. The south side is Granite Road and to the immediate south on granite road is more cropland. The Conrad Airport is located north of the club with cropland between. (See Figures 1, 2, and 3).

10. Description of Project:

- Remove and replace wood trap houses with poured concrete houses (See Figure 5).
- Remove and replace one set of existing cement trap lanes, with a new set of wider, handicapped accessible cement lanes.
- Remove and replace old manual trap machines with automatic machines.
- Construction of a new multi-purpose indoor shooting facility with handicapped access and bathrooms, providing indoor year round air rifle & pistol, small bore rifle & pistol, and archery ranges (See Figure 6).
- Provide handicapped parking area (See Figure 5).

In Accordance With (IAW) contracts agreements with Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and all projects are to be completed by June 30, 2009.

11. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

(a) Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>
Pondera County Sanitarian	Septic & Drain field
Pondera County	Building Permit

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
4-H and Pondera Shooting Sports Club (pending request)	\$ 27,500
Friends of the NRA	\$ 8,895
Kronebusch Electric	\$ 8,000
Pondera 4-H Shooting Sports	\$ 10,370
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$139,868

12. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:

The shooting complex will be open to the public for shooting events, meetings, workshops, etc. Additionally, members of the public may purchase a membership which allows them to utilize the facilities for individual shooting. Membership fees will help pay for utilities, insurance, and other ongoing expenses. Additional fundraisers will fund the rest of the ongoing operating costs. League shooting is made up of team members from Conrad, Valier, Dupuyer, Choteau, and Shelby, Montana. User organizations include: Conrad Gun Club, Pondera Valley Rifle League, Archery Club, Pondera Sheriff's Department, Hunter Education, Pondera 4-H, FFA Club, and the Boy Scouts. Additionally the Conrad Police Department has shown interest in using the range for shotgun training.

13. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:

Proposed range improvements and safety enhancements had been discussed within the membership of the club and with the associated project vendors and contractors.

14. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
MSU Extension – Pondera County

15. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Adele Stenson, Grant writer and administrator,
Pondera County Courthouse, 20 4th Ave SW, Conrad, MT 59425, (406) 271-4054

16. Other Pertinent Information:

An old building, supposedly a school house built in the 1920s or 30s, is located on the leased Gun Club property. There is no historic documentation for this structure, nor is it a registered historic building. The building has been owned by the Conrad Gun Club for many years, and is not county property (See Part II, Table 1). At this time, nobody knows or remembers where the building came from originally. The building sat on the edge of town for a number of years, where the club formerly shot trap. At some point the building was moved to the current Conrad Gun Club site on property leased from the County. The building has been used primarily for storage by the gun club. The building is not on a foundation but is on skids, which is presumably how it was moved to its current location. There are no plans to either restore or preserve the structure. The intent of the club is to sell the building to a local landowner who plans to use it for storage.

The club has gone to exclusively using White Flyer biodegradable targets.

Shooting range applications require the participant's governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range funding assistance. Resolution Date: April 21, 2008

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmental sensitive areas)

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		#2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		#5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites			X			#9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

2. & 5. There are no live streams or ponds on the site and no delineated wetlands.

9. An old building, supposedly a school house built in the 1920s or 30s, is located on the leased Gun Club property. The building is not county property, but is and has been owned by the Conrad Gun Club for many years (See paragraph 16). There is no historic documentation for this structure, nor is it a registered historic building. There are no plans to either restore or preserve the structure. The intent of the club is to sell the building to a local landowner who

plans to use it for storage.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		#4
5. Human health				X		#5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		#7
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

4. The site is adjacent to and surrounded on three sides by agricultural land.

5. Range site plans, construction and the ongoing operational and maintenance plans meet the standards of safety for the range participants and the public at large.

7. Range will provide year round controlled access and fulfils a need for a range to accommodate law enforcement training, hunter education, and public shooting. Additional ranges within the new shooting sports building will offer indoor air rifle & pistol, small bore rifle & pistol, and archery shooting.

Part III. Environmental Consequences

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? NO

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? This proposed action has no impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Identification of the Preferred Alternatives:

The proposed alternative A, alternative B and the no action alternative were considered.

- **Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in paragraph 10 (Description of Project) to remove and replace wood trap houses with concrete houses, remove and replace one set of concrete trap lanes to replace them with handicapped accessible lanes, remove and replace manual trap machine with automatic machine, construction of new multi-purpose indoor shooting facility, and provide a handicapped parking area.
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** area will remain as an active trap range without proposed improvements.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Two alternatives have been considered, **A (Proposed Alternative)** and **B (No Action Alternative)**. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent.

Neither the proposed alternative (**A**) nor the no action alternative (**B**) would have any significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

- There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative (A)** to construct new concrete trap houses and a multi-purpose indoor shooting facility, replacing manual trap machines with automatic machines, and providing handicapped parking area, in addition to making the range is available to the general public, community organizations, law enforcement, youth groups, Bow Hunter Education and Hunter

Education.

- The **No Action Alternative (B)** would be not to replace wood trap houses and manual trap machines, not to construct a new multi-purpose shooting sports building and not to provide a handicapped parking area, and to continue on with present shooting activities and facilities. Land use would remain the same. Present activities include trap ranges without the proposed improvements to the operations. Therefore the proposed alternative is the prudent alternative.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

NONE

List and explain proposed mitigative measures (stipulations):

NONE

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

Conservation Education, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Helena, MT

Dr. Stan Wilmoth, Deputy State Archeologist, State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT

Adele Stenson, Pondera County courthouse, 20 4th Ave SW, Conrad, MT 59425

PART IV NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the project reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being proposed are on properties leased from Pondera County by the Conrad Gun Club. The low impact activities proposed and the increased recreational opportunity indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative (A). The long history of the Conrad Gun Club providing shooting opportunities to its members and the public indicates support for the proposed alternative. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative (A) for the modernization and expansion proposals outlined in Para. 2 & 10.

EA prepared by: GENE R. HICKMAN
Ecological Assessments
Helena, MT 59602

Date Completed: June 18, 2008

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

None required.

Describe public involvement, if any: Announcement for EA comment will be published in the Independent Observer, P.O. Box 966, Conrad, Montana 59425, phone 271-5561, and on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks website to allow an opportunity for public review. Additionally the EA will be available for review on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks website.